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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH THE HOST COUNTRY

Letter dated 14 October 1994 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am obliged to refer to the letter dated 11 September 1994 addressed to you by the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations (A/49/377-S/1994/1047). That letter made reference to "problems" experienced by officials of the Government of Iraq in obtaining United States visas.

The United States Government and the United States Mission to the United Nations are acutely aware of the obligations of the host country to permit transit to and from the United Nations Headquarters district. The United States Government takes these responsibilities very seriously and, as a matter of course and obligation, facilitates issuance of visas without regard to the state of relations between the sending State and the United States.

The United States, as a permanent member of the Security Council, is also keenly aware of the importance of official contacts between representatives of the Government of Iraq and officials of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Special Commission, other members of the Security Council, and officials of other United Nations bodies. The United States Government processes requests for visas for such meetings as rapidly as possible, and often issues such visas in spite of its requirement that all officials travelling to the United Nations on official business submit requests for visas at least 15 working days before their projected arrival in the United States.

On numerous occasions, the United States has issued visas to Iraqi officials despite the fact that they have given little or no advance notice of their travel and need for a visa, or have applied for visas at a different time or place than their official notification said they would, or have applied outside of normal working hours. In a great many cases, Iraqi officials who

come for Security Council sanctions reviews every two months on a regular schedule apply for visas on very short notice and during hours when our Embassy in Amman - the post where Iraqi officials prefer to apply for visas - is closed.

The United States Government can only conclude that it is a deliberate practice of Iraqi officials to come to the American Embassy on weekends, holidays, or after normal working hours to demand that their visas be issued on the spot. The Iraqi Embassy in Amman even demanded that the United States open its Embassy on Id-al-Adha, an important Islamic holiday. In this and other instances, the Iraqi officials had been informed several days earlier that their visas were ready to be issued during normal business hours. Because of the inconvenience and expense of opening the Embassy for after-hours visa issuance, the United States Mission advised the Permanent Mission of Iraq by a note verbale dated 15 July 1994 that henceforth visas would be issued only during regular working hours.

Despite acknowledging this note, Mr. Tariq Aziz and various other Iraqi officials went to the American Embassy in Amman over the weekend on Saturday, 10 September, to obtain their visas, even though such visas were available beginning on Sunday, 4 September. Once again, special arrangements were made for Mr. Tariq Aziz and some members of his party to obtain their visas while the Embassy was closed, but it proved impossible to issue visas to three members who had not applied in time to complete the visa process. Those three individuals received their visas three days later.

I request that this letter be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 139, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Madeleine K. ALBRIGHT